**9.1 Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities**

Iowa State University is committed to the excellence of graduate education and seeks to provide and sustain an environment conducive to the sharing, extending, and critical examination of knowledge.

Graduate students play an integral role in the ability of the University to fulfill both its research and teaching mission, contributing to the breadth and quality of an educational experience expected at an American Association of Universities (AAU) public university.

By their accomplishments and future promise, graduate students represent one of the University’s best investments in producing a distinguished history and rich legacy. A graduate student experience marked by fairness and equitable treatment is the first step in forging a lifelong commitment to the University.

Articles 9.1.2 and 9.1.3 seek to summarize the rights and responsibilities of graduate students, especially as these rights and responsibilities are already guaranteed and outlined in University policies. Article 9.1.1 outlines grievance procedures to be followed if the graduate student feels that the rights are not being met.

**9.1.1 Grievance Procedures**

If a graduate student feels unfairly or unjustly treated, or that their rights are being violated, the graduate student is encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate either by contacting the Senator representing the student’s academic unit, or by contacting the President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate. The Graduate and Professional Student Senate will help guide the student the appropriate university administration and university entities to resolve the situation. Graduate students are also referred to Article 9.4 where specific grievance procedures are described for a variety of situations that may be encountered. Students also have the right to complain to the Dean of the Graduate College. In addition, students are encouraged to contact the Ombuds Office for unbiased and neutral assessment and assistance with the Student’s situation.

**9.1.2 Graduate Student Rights**

As students first, graduate students have the following fundamental rights:

* The right to freedom from discrimination and harassment as guaranteed in ISU’s Policy on Discrimination and Harassment;
* The right to professional treatment and reasonable confidentiality in their communications with professors; graduate student performance and behavior should only be discussed for professional purposes in a collegial manner, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act;
* The right to engage in a free exchange of ideas, including the ability to test received wisdom in accordance with guidelines established in the ISU Student Disciplinary Code;
* The right to clearly defined official grievance procedures and informal complaint procedures at the program, department, and university levels (see section 9.4 of this handbook), including clear guidelines for formal grade appeals;
* The right to clearly defined graduate program degree requirements, time-to-degree expectation, knowledge of changes to degree requirements with the ability to stay with the degree requirements that were in place when they started their degree;
* The right to a safe and clean environment;
* The right to be treated respectfully, as potential future peers.

As teaching, research, and administrative assistants, graduate students occupy a potentially vulnerable class of university citizens. Except in extreme circumstances, funding and tuition scholarship should not be denied to an assistantship appointee mid-semester or mid-contract.

Graduate students who have contributed significantly to research activities have the right to be given appropriate levels of credit as co-authors on related publications and presentations, consistent with the accepted standards in their fields of study.

Graduate Research assistants have the right to request a change in assistantship appointment supervisor. These requests should be reserved for extreme situations, and the student is expected to make every reasonable effort to resolve the issues with the supervisor in a professional manner prior to making a request. If a request is made, the graduate program is expected to make every reasonable effort to find an alternative assignment. However, the graduate student should be aware that funding and alternative assignments are not always possible or guaranteed.

**9.1.3 Graduate Student Responsibilities**

As students, scholars, university citizens, and/or assistantship appointees, graduate students have the fundamental responsibility to pursue excellence in graduate study, education, and training in accordance with the following:

* Behave in a professional and courteous manner;
* Uphold ethical standards in research and scholarship;
* Communicate regularly with faculty, mentors, and advisers;
* Fulfill obligations related to assistantship appointments to the best of one’s ability;
* Acknowledge deficiencies in knowledge or training and work to improve these deficiencies;
* Recognize that failure to perform assistantship duties in a satisfactory manner may constitute cause for disciplinary action or dismissal;
* Seek out training and development opportunities to improve professional abilities;
* Adhere to all relevant university, state, and federal rules and regulations in performance of duties;
* Understand one’s role in the development of relationships with faculty mentors;
* Strive to participate in the campus community, contributing vision and energy to the mission of this public university.

**9.2 Best Practices for Graduate Education**

This article seeks to outline some Best Practices for graduate education. These practices are encouraged by the Graduate College and are meant to enhance Graduate student Education, and to allow the graduate student to pursue excellence.

Best Practices often vary among disciplines, and the variance is occasionally large between subdisciplines. The following sections (9.2.1 and 9.2.2) should be interpreted within the context of discipline-specific norms and expectations. As such, if a graduate student has concerns or wishes to broach issues relating to the following best practices, the student should make every effort to resolve the matter with those who are immediately involved with the issue. If the graduate student feels the issue is not satisfactorily resolved at the department or program level, the student can follow the grievance procedures outlined in 9.1.1 and 9.4.

**9.2.1 Best Practices for Graduate Assistant Supervision**

The following are Best Practices of Supervisors and are intended to protect the welfare of graduate students.

* Create fair and equitable educational environments with information about the benefits, terms, and conditions of the appointment clearly communicated at the outset of the appointment;
* Clearly define and articulate the nature and scope of tasks that the graduate student may assume in relation to the assistantship appointment;
* Carefully supervise and regulate demands on graduate student time commitments to meet assigned tasks related to assistantship appointments;
* Monitor nature of teaching, research, service, or professional development responsibilities to ensure that assigned tasks are appropriate to the graduate student’s academic success;
* Ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, graduate assistants who are not legally eligible to for appointment due to immigration status requirements or lapses in contracts are not assigned formal duties until their eligibility or contract status is resolved;
* Provide accurate information regarding projected financial support for the duration of the graduate student’s education and training upon entry into an academic program. Should this support change at any time during the course of study, graduate students should be informed in writing in a timely manner;
* Provide a safe, clean, and appropriate office and laboratory space commensurate with the responsibilities of the student;
* Provide thorough training to ensure success as research, teaching, and/or administrative assistants.

Assistantship appointments are defined in Chapter 3, Article 3.2 of the Graduate College Handbook. For half-time appointments the official university guideline suggests that 20 hours per week should be spent on assistantship duties, with slight variability depending on whether it is a research, teaching or administrative appointment. It is understood that these hours include only duties necessary for completion of research, teaching, and/or administrative appointment responsibilities, excluding research time that directly contributes to the timely completion of a thesis or dissertation if applicable.

Supervisors are encouraged to provide written performance reviews for graduate research, teaching, and administrative assistants on a regular basis and in a fair, transparent, and confidential manner, especially when requested by the graduate student. Results of performance reviews should be shared with the graduate student, who should be given the opportunity and guidance to redress claims and/or remedy deficiencies in performance of assistantship duties. In addition, Faculty members and Research supervisors should be available at reasonable intervals for consultation on coursework and research work as applicable.

Graduate students should be encouraged to attend professional development and career training seminars, workshops, and conferences. Graduate students should not be prevented from attending these professional development and career training opportunities unless it would interfere with their assistantship duties.

**9.2.2 Best Practices for Graduate Students as Junior Researchers**

Graduate students play multiple roles as students, trainees, junior researchers, and potential future collaborators. As such, many opportunities at the program, department and university level are available for professional development in these complex roles and graduate students are encouraged to engage in them.

Education and training opportunities regarding ethical, legal, and logistical issues facing researchers in their respective disciplines through workshops, seminars, and/or orientation programs should not be withheld from graduate students who desire to take advantage of these opportunities. The university provides various resources and opportunities related to these types of education and training. Faculty members should facilitate the uptake of these resources and opportunities when possible, and graduate students should take initiative to seek these resources and opportunities proactively.